1-1-1983

# The Effects Of Rater Communication Apprehension On The Evaluation Of Speaker Anxiety

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# THE EFFECTS OF RATER COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION ON THE EVALUATION OF SPEAKER ANXIETY

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THE EFFECTS OF RATER COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION ON THE EVALUATION OF SPEAKER ANXIETY
(TITLE)

BY

Vintcent Scott Smithson

# THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Speech Communication
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1983
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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| 7/7/83 DATE | Douglas Z. Bock ADVISER |
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Who loveth instruction loveth
knowledge. . .

Proverbs 12 : 1

Only with the careful and thoughtful input of many people is a thesis completed. My special thanks to the members of my thesis committee. Without Dr. Doug Bock's insightful assistance with study design, the project would not have been possible. Dr. Calvin Smith gave me useful suggestions and encouragement; and Dr. Terry Perkins provided ideas necessary to make this a more cohesive study. My thanks to each member for their assistance and guidance.

Thanks also to those participated in the project. Special thanks to Mike and Karen Shelton and Kim Thede for their part in creating the video tapes. It wasn't easy, but they were willing participants and for that I am very grateful. Thanks also to Kathy Ingle, Diana Ingram, Kari Tutwiler and Cathy Feltz, who gave of their time to assist in the experiment.

Special thanks to my parents for their prayers and kind encouragement. Their pride in me has helped me realize many dreams. And thank you to other important people--to Glen and Wanda Wiley for their understanding, and to Fran Wiley for her encouragement, patience and help.

Vintcent Scott Smithson

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# ABSTRACT


The Effects of Rater Communication Apprehension on the Evaluation of Speaker Anxiety

by

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Eastern Illinois University, 1983

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This study investigated the effects of a psychological trait, communication apprehension (CA), upon speech rating behavior. The dependent variable for the study was the anxiety trait score. The central hypothesis of the study maintained that "speech raters with high levels of communication apprehension will evaluate speakers significantly more negatively on the trait of anxiety than will speech raters with low levels of communication apprehension."

Utilizing the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension to determine apprehension levels for the raters, and the Bock-Becker Rating Scale as the evaluative tool, the hypothesis was tested. One hundred fifty-nine E.I.U. speech students participated in the experiment. Results indicate that on the traits of anxiety and analysis, high CA raters were significantly more negative in their evaluations than low CA raters. Thus, the central hypothesis was confirmed. Other results indicated that "halo error" had very little to do with the outcome of the experiment.

Generalizing from the findings, it seems likely that high levels of CA will result in negative trait error on the trait of anxiety in most speech evaluation settings. It is therefore recommended that speech instructors take special steps to eliminate the effects of CA level upon peer, speaker evaluation in the speech classroom. These steps should include lectures or discussion about the nature of Communication Apprehension, its effects in general, and its specific effects on the evaluative process.

# CHAPTER I

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

## Review of the Literature

### Rating Error

We are all evaluators, evaluating other communicators, contexts, and messages. However, in few places is the evaluation of public speaking more stressed and refined than in the classroom setting. In the classroom, students are evaluated on the basis of voice quality, articulation, organization, language, material, delivery, anxiety, and audience analysis.[1] Because the speaker's improvement and understanding will be most affected by the evaluations of others, it is extremely important that all ratings (by instructors and peers) be as accurate as possible.

According to J. P. Guilford, on the basis of its adaptability, ease of use, and ease of assessment, the rating scale is a most effective means of evaluation.[2] Kerlinger defines the rating scale as "a psychological measuring instrument that requires the rater to assign the rated object to categories or continua that have numerals assigned to them."[3] In a public speaking situation, this process demands that the rater assign a number from a given scale to each of several speaker qualities or traits.

At this point, the problems arise. The use of the rating scale--however manageable and profitable is subject to a variety of "rating errors". These "errors" act to diminish the accuracy of the rating procedure, and, according to Bock, most errors can be logically traced

to the rater.[4] Rating error is not wrong; it is simply a deviation from the average evaluation given to a communicative act. If several people evaluate a speech and a minority of them evaluate the speech much different than most raters, that deviation may indicate that something is causing a communication breakdown.[5]

A number of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors may cause a rater to be unduly negative or positive in his evaluations. It is important that all such factors be specified as clearly as possible.[6] To this end, Bock has established a theory of rating error that strives to predict and control rating error.

At the core of Bock's theory is the theoretical proposition that the rater's ability to utilize cognitive, affective, and psychomotor cues in the speech evaluation setting will cause rating errors to occur.[7] In support of this proposition, three constructs have been developed. These constructs involve the act of speech evaluation, the receiver component, and the demand characteristics of the situation.[8]

First, the act of evaluation is affected by the source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, rating instrument, interference and measurement error.[9]

The second construct maintains that rating is most affected by the rater. This simply means that in the rating situation, it is the rater that bears the most responsibility for rating error.[10]

Finally, this theory's third construct indicates that rating error is greatly affected by the demand characteristics of the situation.[11] Any number of factors may actually affect the demand characteristics of a given situation. This means that the rater knows that a great deal is required while rating the speech and even the slightest clue about what

is expected of him in that situation may affect his evaluations.[12] For example, the sex of the experimenter has been shown to act as a demand characteristic in the experimental setting.[13] The demand characteristics of the situation might include both instructor expectations and student expectations.[14]

These constructs, interacting together, provide the framework for Bock's cue utilization theory. The cue utilization theory can be illustrated in the following manner.

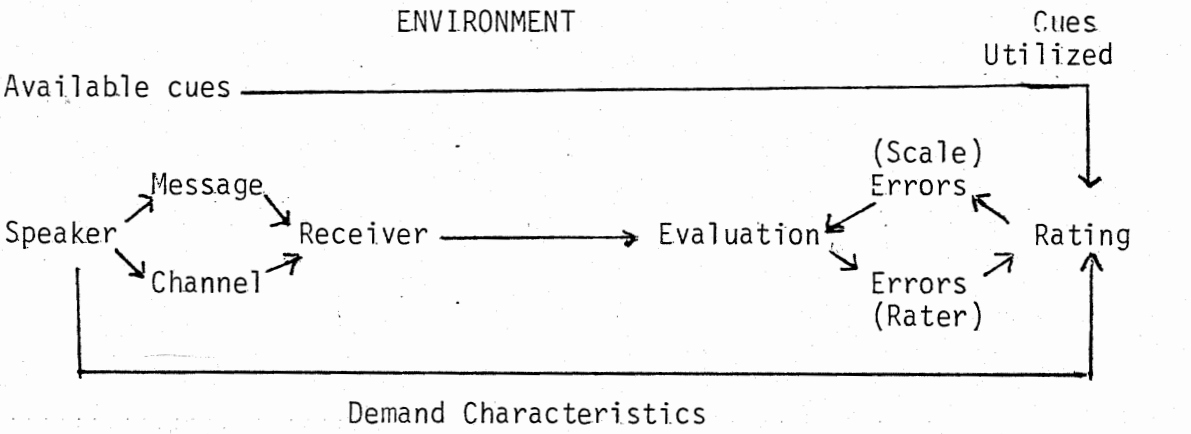


Figure 1. The Cue Utilization Model of Communication.

This model indicates the myriad of possible areas where a communication breakdown might occur. It also indicates that occurrence of rating error may be largely affected by the quantity and quality of cues utilized in the rating process. Thus, over-reliance on a particular cue, be it cognitive, affective, or psycho-motor, may result in the neglect of other important cues, resulting in a lapse in evaluational affectiveness.

Types of Rating Error

A major concern of Fig. 1 is the term "rating error". Three major

types of error (leniency, halo, and trait errors) have been shown to affect the evaluation process. The first of these errors, the leniency error, is defined by Guilford as

> . . . a general type of error which would include those individuals who can justifiably be called easy raters, and, on the other hand, those individuals who for some reason can be called hard raters. In other words, the purpose here is to use the term leniency error, to apply to a general, constant tendency for a rater to rate too high or too low for whatever reasons.[15]

Research indicates that a second type of rating error, the halo error, influences the judgment of a rater based on how well he either likes or dislikes the individual he is evaluating.[16] Ruggs found that raters base their evaluations upon their mental attitude toward the personality of the speaker.[17] Henrickson later determined that liking a person will influence evaluation in a positive manner.[18] In sum, the research indicates that knowing a person and liking that person tends to have a significant effect on the way that person is evaluated (positive halo error).

A third type of error, the trait error, is defined as the tendency of a rater to judge the effectiveness of a speech based on a personal bias about the ingredients of that speech.[19] Research has demonstrated that trait errors can and do exist for the traits of organization, delivery, and ideas. A recent study by Bock and Monroe indicates that (1) high need-for-order males give more positive trait errors on organization, and (2) male sources may receive more positive trait errors on organization than female sources.[20] Further, Bock, Powell, Kitchens, and Flavin tested for the trait of delivery, and using body movement as the independent variable, found that evaluation of the delivery trait

could be affected.[21] Finally, Bock and Saine determined that the trait of ideas can be altered, through the manipulation of source credibility (audience perception of the speaker's level of competency), attitude valence (degree of consistency between the receiver's attitude and the propositions of the speaker), and task sensitization (demand characteristics of a situation which clue the receiver in on what is expected of him), in such a way as to produce either negative or positive trait error.[22] These studies indicate that trait error can be a virulent force within the rater and the rating process, causing the rater to make biased positive or negative evaluations for the traits of ideas, organization and delivery.

In order to more clearly understand the sources of trait error, consideration must be given to the rating scale used by the rater. Bock modified a scale for speech evaluation that contains seven traits: organization, language, material, delivery, analysis, voice, and anxiety (See App. A). Evaluating a speech using this scale has been found to be both reliable and valid.[23] It seems likely, too, that each of these seven traits could host trait error (i.e. organization trait error, language trait error, material trait error, delivery trait error, analysis trait error, voice trait error, and anxiety trait error). As already indicated, research has shown that trait error can affect the traits of organization, delivery and ideas. Bock and Munro, using need-for-order as an independent variable, tested the trait organization and found that a rater's need-for-order level can result in a negative or positive trait error on organization.[24] Extending the logic that a rater's personal traits can affect that rater's evaluations, it seems likely that the rater's evaluation of a speaker's anxiety level may be

affected by that rater's own level of anxiety.

Communication Apprehension

Communication Apprehension is broadly defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."[25] Communication Apprehension (CA) must, however, be distinguished from the related constructs of "reticence" and "unwillingness to communicate". The term reticence originally referred to an individual's characteristic silence in communication situations, a condition brought on by anxiety. However, according to J. C. McCroskey, recent study has removed anxiety from its role as the central cause of reticence, thus separating the concept from CA (which maintains anxiety as the central causitive factor for communication avoidance).[26] Degree of "unwillingness to communicate" is quite similar to reticence because it focuses on a predisposition to avoid oral communication and "recognizes a multiplicity of potential causitive elements which could lead to such a predisposition, including apprehension, alienation, low self-esteem, introversion, and so forth."[27] Quite clearly, the reticence, unwillingness to communicate and CA do share similarities, but, for the most part, can and should be distinguished from one another.

In many ways, CA can actually be termed a sub-construct of reticence. The reasoning is simple: though CA, like reticence, specifies that people with high apprehension tend to avoid all oral communication, it further limits the nature of causation to a single element--anxiety. CA theory recognizes that communication avoidance can be a result of other causes, but it is maintained that these causes fall outside the realm of the construct.[28] CA seems to form a simple, single

approach to oral anxiety while functioning as but one of several possible sub-constructs of reticence.

Oral CA can be broadly divided into two categories: state apprehension and trait apprehension. According to Spielberger and Lamb, trait apprehension is characterized by a general, non-specific fear of all forms of oral communication.[29] Conversely, state apprehension is characterized by fear of a specific oral communication situation, whether it be interviewing for a job or speaking to a group of strangers.[30]

Of course, the most obvious example of state CA is "stage fright", defined as the fear or anxiety a person feels when communicating in a situation where other individuals are in positions of observation and evaluation.[31] Stage fright is primarily a temporary state that is brought on by a specific, defined, observable situation. Stage fright, and other forms of state CA, are normal, even healthy responses to given situations provided the person experiencing them can constructively channel the resultant energies and actions.

On the other hand, individuals with trait CA normally seek to avoid almost all oral communication, directing their fear of communication non-specifically to all forms of communication--an unhealthy and even harmful practice. Studies have shown that trait CA in America is rampant, affecting up to twenty percent of the population in many settings and among most age groups.[32] Further, the myriad of effects have been shown to be generally harmful to affected individuals. Research indicates that a high level of CA contributes to an individual's general academic, social and personal failure. These failures, study shows, seem to encourage high CAs to view others in their environment negatively. The following research illustrates these points.

Several studies have contributed a great deal of information concerning the plethera of academic problems that can be associated with CA. Deffenbacker found that students who were apprehensive about speaking or performing in front of other students were more fearful of negative evaluations and were less assertive in social situations in general.[33] McCroskey demonstrated that fifteen to twenty percent of all school children suffer from high levels of CA, and that high CA contributes to avoidance and lack of success in academic endeavors.[34] In a more recent study, McCroskey and Anderson found that high CAs have lower achievement levels in interaction oriented educational systems.[35] Clearly, the academic effects of CA can be harmful.

Another study supported the hypothesis that people with high CA will engage in less self-disclosure than other people.[36] Self-disclosure is defined by Colbert as "information about ones self communicated to another, that one would be unlikely to communicate to anyone else."[37] And the lack of self-disclosure may have harmful and even devastating effects upon any relationship.[38] Further, McCroskey and Sheahan reported that high CAs usually suffer from greater stress as a result of the destruction of a close relationship than do low CAs.[39] Finally, research indicates that high CAs are less likely to talk in small group discussions, thus decreasing their chances for exchange of ideas and personal growth.[40] Clearly, the consequences of excessive CA levels can be detrimental to an individual's personal life.[41]

The nearly constant negative results of the research caused researchers to question the general attitude of high CAs toward those around them. In both student and organizational settings, it was found that high CAs tend to find others in their environment less attractive than did people

with low levels of CA.[42]

The research has generally been conducted within the confines of the following constructs, set forward by McCroskey:

> 1. People who experience a high level of CA will withdraw from and seek to avoid communication when possible.
>
> 2. As a result of their withdrawal from and avoidance of communication, people who experience a high level of CA will be perceived less positively than people who experience lower levels of CA, by others in their environment.
>
> 3. As a result of their withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, and in conjunction with the negative perceptions fostered by those behaviors, people who experience a high level of CA will negatively impact in terms of their economic, academic, political and social lives.[43]

In sum, study indicates that high CAs suffer as a result of the apprehension effects. A further result of apprehension is high CAs assume an apparently negative attitude toward others in their environment. The effects of this negative attitude upon classroom speaker evaluations has yet to be properly assessed.

## Statement of the Problem

In sum, then, CA is a widespread and generally detrimental trait of an individual. It affects about twenty percent of the typical college population.[44] This simply means that in any given public speaking classroom setting, about one-fifth of the students may be high apprehensives.

Specifically, this study is concerned with clarifying the effects of high levels of rater CA upon (1) trait error and (2) cue utilization. Again, trait error is defined as a personal bias by the speaker about the ingredients of the speech.[45] Cue utilization is defined as "the total number of stimuli in any situation that a person observes, maintains an orientation towards, responds to, or associates with a response."[46] At

this point, the research question is, quite simply--what effect will a rater's level of CA have on his cue utilization as exhibited by trait error.

The Bock and Becker scale,[47] evaluates seven categories including: organization, language, material, delivery, analysis, voice and anxiety (See Appendix A). It seems likely that trait error could also be subdivided into seven types, corresponding with the Bock and Becker scale (i.e. organization trait error, language trait error, material trait error, delivery trait error, analysis trait error, voice trait error and anxiety trait error).[48]

The trait of anxiety seems to be the logical place to begin a study of the effects of CA upon rating behavior. Further, since CA is a psychological trait, it seems likely that information gathered from an examination of CA effects upon speaker evaluation would contribute the following to rating error theory: (1) an increase in our comprehension of the causes of trait error, (2) an increase in our understanding of the effects of CA upon classroom evaluation of speakers, and (3) a validation for the Bock and Guinand theory of cue utilization.

In order to determine the effects of high CA levels upon rating behavior, specifically anxiety trait error, this study maintained the following objectives to determine the impact of the psychological trait of CA upon cue utilization during the evaluation (rating) process. CA, because it is a psychological trait, should affect the psychological trait of anxiety found on the Bock and Becker Rating Scale.[49] The purpose, then, of this study, was to examine the effects of CA upon the trait error of anxiety.

## Rationale

The Bock Theory of Rating Error revolves around the theoretical proposition that the "rater's ability to utilize cognitive, affective and psycho-motor cues in the speech evaluation setting will cause rating error to occur."[50] Three constructs support the central proposition. The first construct maintains that evaluation is affected by source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, rating instrument, interference, and measurement error.[51] The second construct states that rating error is most affected by the receiver or rater.[52] And the third construct indicates that rating error is greatly affected by the demand characteristics of the situation.[53] These constructs provide a fundamental starting point for an examination of rating error. In order to provide further validation for the central proposition of the rating error theory (the proposition maintains that cue utilization by the rater will cause rating error to occur), this study will examine the mediating factor of CA.

CA, or the anxiety a person feels about oral communication, may have a number of effects. The following studies (of effects) are of great importance to this research:

(1) A 1976 study indicates that high CA individuals are just as likely as low CAs to give low personal and social evaluations to other high CAs. (This fact seems to dictate that high CA raters will <u>not</u> exhibit positive trait error for high CA speakers on the basis of empathy. As McCroskey bluntly puts it: "Simply put, the results indicate that no one likes a high apprehensive, even if they are one.")[54]

(2) A pattern has developed in the research, indicating that individuals with high CA levels find other people in their environment

less attractive than do people with low CA levels. This fact has been noted among college students and adults.[55] This research indicates that for reasons yet to be fully clarified, high CAs are more negative about others than low CAs.

On this basis of this information, it seems likely that high CAs will evaluate classroom speakers more negatively than will low CAs. And, if the cue utilization construct is correct, high CAs will utilize a maximum of anxiety cues. High CAs, aware of their own states, may look for anxiety in others, and, due to increased utilization of anxiety cues, should demonstrate a negative trait error for anxiety. Therefore, the following hypothesis was posited.

> $H_1$: Speech raters with high levels of communication apprehension will evaluate speakers significantly more negative on the trait of anxiety than will speech raters with low levels of communication apprehension.

Utilizing 159 subjects, a series of video-taped speeches, the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA), (a measure of the subject's level of communication anxiety), and the Bock-Becker Rating Scale, the above hypothesis was tested. Results were analyzed by means of a One-Way Analysis of Variance and a t-test. The following chapter more specifically documents the methodology employed in this study.

# CHAPTER II

# METHODOLOGY

## Subjects

Subjects were college students (N=159) enrolled in the basic speech course at Eastern Illinois University, spring, 1982. Nine separate classes, ranging in size from fifteen to twenty-three members, were randomly selected. The make-up of the basic speech course at Eastern is very random; and, although a majority of the students are freshmen, subjects also included several sophomores, juniors and seniors. Forty-one percent of the subjects were males (N=66), and fifty-nine percent (N=93) were females.

Subjects participating in the study contributed information during two separate class meetings. Represented in the classes were students with Business, Science, Educational and Humanities majors.

## Design

The dependent variable for the study was anxiety trait error. Trait error scores were calculated for all subjects using Guilford's procedure.[56] The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) was used to establish a level of communication apprehension (anxiety) for each subject. Communication Apprehension level was used as the independent variable.

In order to test the central hypothesis, a CA score was determined for each subject on the basis of his or her responses to the PRCA. The

PRCA form used for this study (involving twenty questions--the standard form) yields scores ranging from extremely low (20) to extremely high (100). In the past, most studies using PRCA scores have established a median of 60--all scores above 60 were classified as "high CAs", and all scores below 60 were classified as "low CAs". However, as Powers and Smythe have noted, "in the absence of data representing the achievement of those students who display what would be labeled 'average' or 'normal' levels of communication apprehension, how may any differences between those students either high or low in level of communication apprehension be meaningfully assessed?"[57]

It was therefore decided that PRCA scores for this study would be classified in the following manner. Those scores of 70 and above were deemed high CA. Scores of 50-70 were classified as moderate CA, and scores of 49 and below were termed low CA.

A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed in order to determine if a significant difference existed between the speaker anxiety trait evaluations of the low and high apprehensives. A t-test was utilized to determine directional significance of the ANOVA. The t-test is a comparison of means that allows the experimenter to assess the amount of variance between two groups. In this instance, the level of significance was established as t=.05.

As a validity check, ANOVAs were computed for all traits on the Bock-Becker Rating scale. And, in order to establish even greater validity, halo error ANOVAs were computed for each speaker.

## Measuring Instruments

### PRCA

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) was developed in 1970 by James McCroskey. The PRCA is a device that can be effectively used to measure the oral communication apprehension level of an individual.[58] Standard reliability of the PRCA is considered to fall within the range of .90 - .93.[59]

Concerning validity of the PRCA, McCroskey points out that several studies have used the PRCA as a measuring device.[60] The results of these studies indicate that (1) the PRCA is capable of predicting actions consistent with oral communication apprehension theory,[61] (2) the PRCA "is correlated with other personality variables at a level theoretically consistent with the communication apprehension construct,"[62] and (3) the PRCA provides accurate measurement of a quality of an individual that can be manipulated through intervention.[63] Thus, McCroskey concludes, the PRCA is a valid measure of oral communication apprehension.[64] The PRCA is clearly the most consistent and most competent oral communication apprehension measuring device available.

### Bock-Becker Rating Scale

The Bock-Becker Rating Scale was used by each rater to evaluate a fifteen minute video-tape containing three separate speeches. The Bock-Becker Rating Scale has demonstrated both reliability and validity in the past.[65] Of the seven traits listed on the Scale (i.e. organization, voice, language, material, delivery, analysis and anxiety), only one, anxiety, was of central importance to this research. However, the remaining six traits were used as validity checks for the anxiety trait scores.

## Procedures

Early in the 1983 spring semester, the twenty-item PRCA was administered to all subjects. Scores were tabulated, and subjects were divided into three groups consisting of high CAs (scores of 70-100), moderate CAs (scores of 50-69), and low CAs (scores of 20-49).

The second stage of the experiment occurred about four weeks later when each class of subjects was requested to evaluate (utilizing the Bock-Becker Rating Scale) one video-taped set of three speeches. The use of the Bock-Becker Scale was carefully explained and questions were encouraged (in order to decrease the chances of experimenter effects, the individual instructors of each participating class volunteered to conduct this portion of the experiment themselves). To insure further validity, the following precautions has been taken:

(1) Three experienced speakers were asked to participate in the study. Each speaker presented one or two speeches. These speeches were video-taped for later editing. A male speaker presented the same speech twice, once demonstrating high anxiety characteristics and once demonstrating low anxiety characteristics. A female speaker repeated the same process with a speech of her own. A third speaker, female, presented a control speech demonstrating a moderate level of apprehension. This speech was used to "mask" the experiment from the subjects.

(2) Validity of the taped speeches was determined by four speech instructors, whose evaluations provided the basis for categorizing each speech as high, low, or moderately apprehensive.

(3) The speeches were arranged, in varying order, on four separate tapes. Each tape contained three speeches (i.e. tape #1 contained the male and female high apprehensive speeches and a control speech; tape #2

contained the male high apprehensive speech, the female low apprehensive speech, and the control speech; tape #3 contained the male low apprehensive, the female high apprehensive speech, and the control speech; and tape #4 contained the male and female low apprehensive speeches and the control speech. In this manner, the effects of order of the speeches and sex of speaker were controlled for.

Subjects were told that the speeches were part of an E.I.U. speech department "public speaking contest" and that student participation was necessary in order to obtain the fairest possible results. The subjects then viewed the speeches and the evaluations were collected. Each class session lasted about thirty minutes, and all tapes were evaluated by at least two sections (classes) of the basic speech course.

# CHAPTER III

# RESULTS

## Trait Error Results

Table 1 indicates that a significant relationship exists between the CA level of the evaluator and anxiety trait error. High CAs were significantly more negative than the low and moderate CAs in evaluation of the anxiety trait. The results of a t-test (See Table 1) indicate directional significance at the .05 level, clearly supporting the central hypothesis of the study. Table 1 shows, as predicted, that high CAs evaluate all speakers more negatively on the trait of anxiety than low CA raters.

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 indicate that no significant relationship exists between the level of CA and delivery, language, material, organization, and voice trait errors. However, Table 7 indicates that high CAs evaluated speakers significantly more negative on the trait of analysis than did low CA raters. This may indicate faulty cue utilization by the high CA raters, that may ultimately have led them to exhibit a negative trait error on analysis trait evaluation. This result is discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

## Halo Error Results

The data was tested for halo error effects in order to provide a further validity check on the study. As Tables 8-10 indicate, in the large majority of halo error ANOVAs, no significant halo error was present. However, Tables 12 and 13 do indicate halo error significance.

This might be explained by recent research indicating that females tend to exhibit a positive halo error on other females. Since both speakers were women, it is possible that some "same sex halo effects" did occur.[66]

TABLE 1

ANOVA

Anxiety Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 3.36 | 1.68 | 2.76* |
| Within | 157 | 95.32 | .60 | |
| Total | 159 | 98.68 | | |

t-test

| High CA Mean | Low CA Mean | DF | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| -.20 | .22 | 157 | 2.59* |

(*Note: significant at the .05 level)

TABLE 2

ANOVA

Language Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 3.6 | 1.8 | .81 |
| Within | 157 | 348.68 | 2.2 | |
| Total | 159 | 352.28 | | |

TABLE 3

ANOVA

Delivery Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 6.9 | 3.46 | 1.29 |
| Within | 157 | 422.31 | 2.69 | |
| Total | 159 | 429.21 | | |

TABLE 4

ANOVA

Material Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 1.55 | .77 | 1.72 |
| Within | 157 | 70.63 | .45 | |
| Total | 159 | 72.18 | | |

TABLE 5

ANOVA

Organization Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 1.79 | .89 | 1.72 |
| Within | 157 | 81.59 | .52 | |
| Total | 159 | 83.38 | | |

TABLE 6

ANOVA

Voice Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 1.3 | .65 | 1.27 |
| Within | 157 | 80.03 | .51 | |
| Total | 159 | 81.33 | | |

TABLE 7

ANOVA

Analysis Trait Error

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 3.87 | 1.93 | 5.00* |
| Within | 157 | 60.75 | .39 | |
| Total | 159 | 64.62 | | |

t-test

| High CA Mean | Low CA Mean | DF | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| -.248 | .119 | 157 | 2.57* |

(*Note: significant at the .05 level)

TABLE 8

ANOVA

Tape 1--Male High CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .49 | .25 | .65 |
| Within | 35 | 13.38 | .38 | |
| Total | 37 | 13.87 | | |

TABLE 9

ANOVA

Tape 1--Control

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 1.38 | .69 | .70 |
| Within | 35 | 34.49 | .99 | |
| Total | 37 | 35.87 | | |

TABLE 10

ANOVA

Tape 1--Female High CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .62 | .31 | .45 |
| Within | 35 | 24.24 | .69 | |
| Total | 37 | 24.86 | | |

TABLE 11

ANOVA

Tape 2--Male High CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .07 | .035 | .06 |
| Within | 52 | 33. | .63 | |
| Total | 54 | 33.07 | | |

TABLE 12

ANOVA

Tape 2--Female Low CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 10.36 | 5.19 | 5.27* |
| Within | 52 | 51.09 | .98 | |
| Total | 54 | 61.45 | | |

t-test

| High CA Mean | Low CA Mean | DF | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| .26 | .56 | 52 | 1.15* |

(Note*--significant at the .05 level)

TABLE 13

ANOVA

Tape 2--Control

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 10.57 | 5.29 | 5.71* |
| Within | 52 | 48.16 | ,93 | |
| Total | 54 | 58.73 | | |

t-test

| High CA Mean | Low CA Mean | DF | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| .60 | .21 | 52 | 1.08* |

(*Note: Significant at the .05 level)

TABLE 14

ANOVA

Tape 3--Male Low CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .57 | .29 | .42 |
| Within | 28 | 18.93 | .68 | |
| Total | 30 | 19.50 | | |

TABLE 15

ANOVA

Tape 3--Female High CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 1.13 | .57 | 1.20 |
| Within | 28 | 13.2 | .47 | |
| Total | 30 | 14.33 | | |

TABLE 16

ANOVA

Tape 3--Control

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .35 | .17 | .47 |
| Within | 28 | 10.28 | .37 | |
| Total | 30 | 10.63 | | |

TABLE 17

ANOVA

Tape 4--Female Low CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 3.44 | 1.7 | 1.86 |
| Within | 32 | 29.58 | .92 | |
| Total | 34 | 33.02 | | |

TABLE 18

ANOVA

Tape 4--Control

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | .74 | .37 | .31 |
| Within | 32 | 37.8 | 1.18 | |
| Total | 34 | 38.54 | | |

TABLE 19

ANOVA

Tape 4--Male Low CA

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CA | 2 | 2.3 | 1.14 | .93 |
| Within | 32 | 39.53 | 1.24 | |
| Total | 34 | 41.83 | | |

# CHAPTER IV

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

## Theoretical Discussion

The central hypothesis of the study stated that high CAs would exhibit negative trait error by giving significantly more negative scores on the anxiety trait than low CAs. The hypothesis was significant at the .05 level (See Table 1). High CAs, as predicted, exhibited negative trait error on the trait of anxiety.

For the Rating Error Theory, the results yield evidence that cue utilization, and subsequent evaluations based on those cues, can be affected by a rater's own traits. In this instance, there are at least three possible explanations for the manner in which cues were utilized. One possibility is that high CAs may have amplified, in their own minds, the significance of each anxiety cue they perceived. A second explanation may be that high CAs actually perceived and utilized more of the anxiety cues demonstrated by the speaker, than did other raters. A final possibility is that negative empathy was involved. In other words, high CAs may have projected their own apprehensive attitudes (about speaking) into the speakers, consequently creating a number of imaginary cues or misinterpreting unrelated cues as anxiety cues.

More specifically, this study lends support to the theory that cue utilization of psycho-motor, affective and cognitive cues significantly affects rating behavior. In this case, cue utilization of anxiety trait cues was significantly altered by CA to the extent that negative anxiety

trait error occured. A single, plausible generalization of the evidence might be that the quantity and quality of cues utilized by a rater are affected by that rater's inherent traits.

Concerning trait error, the results indicate that high levels of rater CA can result in a rating error. In this instance, a negative trait error was present on the trait of anxiety. Because of the diverse make-up of the college classes tested (classes were predominantly freshmen and sophomores, however juniors and seniors were also represented) and the large sample size (N=159), the results may be generalizable to other college populations. If this is the case, it seems likely that high levels of CA will result in negative trait error on the trait of anxiety in most evaluation situations.

As previously noted in chapter III, the study indicated that high CAs demonstrated a negative trait error on analysis, as well as anxiety. This finding demands further research, but there is a possible explanation.

In a 1975 study, Bock and Saine found that the more similar normal rater and a speaker are, the higher that rater's evaluation will be on the trait of ideas (ideas is synonymous here with analysis). High CAs evaluate all speakers more negatively on anxiety than do low CAs; consequently, high CAs may perceive all speakers as somewhat similar to themselves. Since high CAs seem to exhibit some form of negative empathy on anxiety, it follows that a negative attitude toward perceived anxiety similarities might cause a more negative rating on the analysis trait.[67]

## Practical Application

The implications of this study for the classroom are numerous. First, it should be pointed out that although high CAs tend to seek occupations

which demand little oral communication,[68] they may still face, during the course of their lifetimes, a number of situations demanding clear, error-free evaluation. For example, some high CAs may be asked to evaluate the performance of their superiors, their peers, etc. A more likely occurrence might be the job interview, with the high CA individual in a position to evaluate potential employees. In each of these hypothetical instances, it would be important that the high CA be aware of and knowledgeable about his own CA level and the possible repercussions of CA on his evaluation performance.

Recommendations

If knowledge of the trait can change performance, then perhaps the best place to begin is the classroom. In the speech classroom there ample opportunities arise to help the high CA examine the reasons for his unwillingness to communicate. Also, the speech classroom generally offers a number of opportunities for the high CA to evaluate other speakers. To assure the most accurate results, both for the speaker and the high CA rater, the following steps might be taken:

(1) Early in each academic term a measure of student CA level might be administered (the PRCA is generally felt to be the best measurement of CA--though because of its subjectivity, it certainly has its limitations.)[69]

(2) Utilizing the results of the PRCA, or comparable test, the instructor can determine which students are low, moderate, and high CAs (the criteria established earlier in this study would be satisfactory for this purpose).

(3) The instructor, through discussion and lecture, can then provide the information needed to make the high CA student more aware of, and knowledgeable of their trait. To that extent, the results of this

and similar studies should be beneficial.

The findings of this study indicate that the CA level of the evaluator should be taken into account before that evaluator's remarks are fed back to the speaker. If some precautions, such as those mentioned above, are not taken, harmful CA effects may occur. For example, suppose a speaker receives ten written peer evaluations of his speaking performance. Four of the ten raters are highly apprehensive and have rated the speaker negatively on the anxiety trait. One of the following reactions might occur: (1) the speaker, feeling unjustly evaluated, may totally disregard the remainder of the evaluation form. In so doing, he may miss out on comments by the high CA raters that are just and relevant. (2) The speaker may interpret the high CAs negative remarks very seriously, and, because of this new, perceived pressure to reduce anxiety, may actually be more nervous on subsequent speaking occasions. (3) Finally, the speaker, in preparation for subsequent speaking performances, may remember the negative high CA evaluations, and in turn, expend too much effort seeking to eliminate anxiety from the speech. In other words, the speaker may spend so much time attempting to reduce anxiety characteristics from the performance, that other qualities of the speech (i.e. organization, analysis, etc.) may suffer.

Any of these results might occur if High CA evaluations are not accounted for. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that instructors need to be certain students understand CA and the evaluative consequences of CA. An instructor, by following a few simple precautions (some are mentioned earlier), may help neutralize or eliminate the harmful effects of CA, at the same time contributing to the overall maturation of student speakers.

Future Research

The implications of the study for future research are numerous:

(1) This study indicates that high CAs demonstrate a negative trait error for analysis. Future research should work to determine the most specific cause of that error. Does it occur, for example, simply because of the way the analysis cues are worded on the Bock and Becker scale? Or is there another explanation?

(2) Further investigation might concentrate on the effects of classroom setting upon cue utilization. For example, which factors, such as size of class, time of day the class meets, length of class period, etc., may have significant effects on the cue utilization process, and consequently, on speaker evaluations?

(3) Other research should attempt to find sources of trait error for the traits of voice, delivery, language, organization and material.[70] By illuminating major sources of trait error, researchers will contribute to a more accurate classroom evaluation process.

(4) Finally, the level of self-esteem of high CAs should be investigated. Does their own self-concept affect the generally negative attitude that most high CAs have toward others in their environment? It is possible that the high CA's attitude toward others is simply a reflection of the high CA's attitude toward himself.

These and similar studies would contribute much to a fuller comprehension of cue utilization and trait error. The cue utilization construct provides a rational and apparently valid base for the study of rating behavior. Future experimentation should seek to add precision to the theory as a whole.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to future research of

the cue utilization construct. This study has demonstrated that cue utilization can be affected by a trait of the rater, and has defined one cause of the anxiety trait error--communication apprehension. Other traits may be responsible for other errors. Only time and further research will reveal the answers.

The ultimate goal of this research was to help make the rating process a more accurate process. The information and recommendations provided should aid in decreasing the chances of anxiety trait error's occurrence, thus making student and teacher evaluations more accurate and valuable.

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# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A

## BOCK-BECKER RATING SCALE

Speaker_____ Date_____

Subject_____ Assignment_____

| ITEMS | COMMENT | SCORE |
|---|---|---|
| ORGANIZATION: Clear arrangement of ideas? Introduction, body conclusion? Pattern of development adapted to ideas & audience? | | |
| LANGUAGE: Clear, accurate, varied, vivid? Appropriate standard of usage? In conversational mode? | | |
| MATERIAL: Specific, valid, relevant, efficient, interesting? Properly distributed? Adapted to audience? Personal credibility? Use of evidence? | | |
| DELIVERY: Poised, at ease, communicative, erect? Eye contact, Aware of audience reaction to speech? Do gestures match voice and language? | | |
| ANALYSIS: Approach to subject original, interesting? Central idea, purpose clear; divided into significant, interesting, subordinate ideas? | | |
| VOICE: Pleasing, adequate, distracting? Hurried or monotonous pitch, intensity, volume, rate, quality? Expressive of logical, emotional meanings? | | |
| ANXIETY: Was the speaker visibly nervous? Was the speaker confident? Any distracting behaviors? | | |

TOTAL_____

SCALE:

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
Superior Average Inadequate Poor

ID#_____

# APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS: Below are 20 statements about feelings on communicating with other people. Mark the degree to which the statments apply to you by marking whether you:

(1) strongly agree
(2) agree
(3) are undecided
(4) disagree
(5) strongly disagree

Work quickly, but carefully. Just read the statement and mark your first impression.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance I feel very nervous. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | I have no fear of facing an audience. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | I look forward to expressing my opinion at meetings. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. | I find the prospect of speaking mildly pleasant. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. | When communicating, my posture feels strained and unnatural. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. | I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. | Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. | My hands tremble when I try to handle objects on the platform. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | I always avoid speaking in public if possible. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most other people are. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I am fearful and tense all the while I am speaking before a group of people. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I speak before an audience. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Although I am nervous just before getting up, I soon forget my fears and enjoy the experience. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | Conversing with people who hold positions of authority causes me to be fearful and tense. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | I dislike to use my body and voice expressively. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | I feel relaxed and comfortable while speaking. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | I feel self-conscious when I am called upon to answer a question or give an opinion in class. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | I face the prospect of making a speech with complete confidence. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. | I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local television show. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

# VITA

Vintcent Scott Smithson

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: The Effects of Rater Communication Apprehension on the Evaluation of Speaker Anxiety

Major Field: Speech Communication

Vintcent Scott Smithson was born September 30, 1958, in Vandalia, Illinois. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Everett E. Smithson. A 1976 graduate of St. Elmo High School, St. Elmo, Illinois, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in Political Science and Speech Communication from Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois, in 1982.

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